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# STEP LADDER

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**Special Step Ladder  
Event**

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AUTUMN

1956

VOLUME 40

NO. 2

# THE ORDER OF BOOKFELLOWS

*An International Association of Readers and Writers*

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# The STEP LADDER

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"The genuine culture is not of necessity either high or low; it is merely inherently harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory. It is the expression of a richly varied and yet somehow unified and consistent attitude toward life, an attitude which sees the significance of any one element of civilization in its relation to all others. It is, ideally speaking, a culture in which nothing is spiritually meaningless, in which no important part of the general functioning brings with it a sense of frustration, of misdirected or unsympathetic effort."

EDWARD SAPIR in "Culture, Genuine and Spurious,"  
*Selected Writings*, 1949.

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VOL. 40, No. 2

AUTUMN 1956

GALESBURG, ILLINOIS

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David Livingston Lantz  
407½ West Willow Street  
Normal, Illinois

## FROM AUTUMN LIPS

I dare not slumber, only rest my song,  
In each tree's arms to mourn a comrade gone;  
Farewell to all things summer proudly bore,  
And a soft "hello" as I tint the robes she wore.  
Blossomed highways gone to unseen beds,  
With songs of nothingness within their frosted heads;  
Yes, I was cued by summer's training baton,  
To breathe finale movement on all she dewlt upon.  
No I dare not slumber as I warn each tree,  
Of cold advance that keeps fixed eyes on me;  
Each hour of haste think not of me unfair,  
For when I lift my eyes I'll find fresh springland there,  
To waken all her worlds.

Antoinette Scudder  
Paper Mill Playhouse  
Millburn, New Jersey

THE WHITE STALLION  
*A Legend of Cape Cod*

Foam on the wind and hail in the rain —  
Gallop, White Stallion.

With every stroke of your hoof on the sand  
There's a shattered moon, there's a trickling band  
Of diamonds spilt from the mer-queen's hand.  
There's a lantern tied to your tossing mane  
Gallop, White Stallion.

How many years since your master said:  
"Gallop, White Stallion."

A slap of his hand on the steel and snow  
That sheathed the steel of your muscles — so  
"There's a ship out there and the tide is low —  
"And weary men are easily led —  
"Gallop, White Stallion."

Golden coins, how they toss and roll —  
Gallop, White Stallion

How many ships has your weird witch light  
Brought to their doom of a moonless night  
Casks of wine and of spice — and might  
These heavily weigh on your master's soul —  
Gallop, White Stallion.

Hands that clutch at a beam or a spar —  
Gallop, White Stallion —

Those broken limbs in the water's strife  
Sweetheart and mother, sister and wife  
You bear their curse in a weird half life —  
With your lantern's evil flying star,  
Gallop, White Stallion.

No sleep in a wide warm stall again,  
Gallop, White Stallion,  
By wind swung pines and glimmering sand  
Till maybe at last some kindly hand  
Of the old, wise spirits who watch the strand  
Brings rest to your hoofs and your witch torn mane,  
Gallop, White Stallion.

Margaret E. Singleton  
1411 Latta Road  
Rochester 12, New York

### THE PURSUED

In youth, Time used to dally,  
A charming vagabond  
Who tramped the hill and valley  
As leisurely he conned  
The nature-book revealed  
Between green cosmic covers  
With pages unconcealed  
On life and love and lovers.  
His way led into town  
And though he hesitated,  
He entered with a frown.  
Unleashed events, elated,  
Barked at his heels and nipped,  
One clinging in attack  
And biting deep. Time tripped,  
Recovered, fled the pack.  
Pursued now, no more gaited  
To leisure, down the path  
He hastens, ever fated  
To fly from growling wrath  
And yapping circumstance.  
In youth, Time used to dally;  
Not even backward glance  
Can loiter in the valley  
Since he is slave to speed  
And flight his only creed.

Jane Beverlin Tate  
2725 29th Street N.W.  
Washington 8, D. C.

### THE CANDY STORE

Leading into temptation  
of shining display counters  
breathing aromas of horehound and anise —  
here for a penny, a piece of rock candy;  
three cents for a peppermint stick,  
five cents for a jaw-breaker,  
and ten cents brought chocolate creams  
with a scoop of licorice for good measure.  
The little store on the corner,  
assaulted by traffic,  
wasted away with progress,  
and all the gum-drops dissolved  
into the backwash of yesterday.

### LILY POND

Through sun-spattered air  
dragonflies dart  
over grooved leaves  
weathered as a copper roof.  
Under water  
plump goldfish glide sedately.  
From limpid darkness  
brown buds pierce upward  
to open upon a shining surface  
where cups of waxen lilies  
cast flawless reflections  
on transparency.

Belle S. Mooney  
4333 Bellefontaine Avenue  
Kansas City 30, Missouri

## THE SICK GENTLEMAN

Such scandal had never before rocked Center City. Jake said it sure did make trade good while it lasted. His big general store was the town's favorite gossip center where local events were discussed. Mrs. Moore came in at frequent intervals to ask,

"Jake, ain't ye got any bacon yit?"

"No ma'm, Mrs. Moore, I ain't got any bacon yit."

That was always the patient answer. And then Mrs. Moore would join the eager group that volubly repeated every detail of the sick gentleman's advent.

"He clum off a truck — Martha seen him with her own eyes. One of his pants legs got tore when the driver helped him down."

"Hitchhiker, I'll bet," sneered Sally Jones.

"Sure," continued Minnie, the prize tattle-tale. "Martha seen him take a couple o' staggering steps when the truck druv away an' then he jest slumped down right on her front steps."

"Drunk, I'll bet," was Sally's next interjection.

"Yeah — an' before Martha could call the police an' git him took away Alma run right out and tried to lift him up. She's the strongest-minded one of them two sisters. Mebbe she's a right to be seein' she's a nurse. An Johnny Weebles was a-passin' by — "

Mrs. Weebles preened herself on this distinction and added Johnny's racy testimony to that of Martha's.

"Yessir my Johnny was jest a-passin' — he picked up the cap that fell offen that hitch-hiker. An' gosh, Johnny sez — gosh, his gray hair was tousled by fallin' on the steps."

"An' clear unconscious, Martha sez."

"Sure — and Alma told my Johnny to help her carry that hitch-hiker upstairs. An' Alma laid him right onto her own bed and pulled open his shirt."

"My lands." This was the pious ejaculation of Mrs. Pancher, the minister's wife.

"An' Johnny sez the sick gentleman looked plum dead when Alma was a-feelin' of his chist."

"Was Johnny a-feelin' of his chist too?" Molly Fenger asked caustically.

"Good land no. My Johnny ain't one to git fresh like that. But he is awful observin'. It was Alma who was a-feelin' of the chist. An' Alma sez to Johnny, 'Go tell Dr. Miller to come over immejit cause it's an emergency.'"

"I'd say it was another good-fernuthin' he-man." Sally spoke vigorously from a long nurtured disdain of the sex that scorned her conspicuous efforts to escape from single blessedness.

Martha's mature bosom cherished similar disillusioned hopes but her agitation

was not lessened by the doctor's visit. "Is the gentleman bad sick?" she asked, "Or just drunk?"

Not drunk he said — very positive. And a doctor ought to know. Not drunk, he said, but very weak and in need of good care and good food. There was no identification, the doctor said. But there was ways and means of finding out who folks were — the county agents and the police and the missing persons bureau and the government and all — he would try to identify his patient.

Through Jake's efficient information center there was gathered, bit by bit, some priceless elaborations of the mystery. The doctor's patient was from Grandview where an only son had gone from the home into war service and last heard about was reported missing. The neighbors had noticed the patient pining away and saying that mebbe by hitch-hiking to the big army hospital in the next county the missing son might be found. So when the stranger was missing from the home the neighbors just naturally thought the hitch-hiking trip was started — and of course that was the sick gentleman that fell onto Martha's front steps. With fast and furious momentum the story gained larger proportions. Alma not only had the sick gentleman in her own bedroom, but she fed him and she bathed him — yessir every single day. Martha was mad as hops. Martha wasn't one to excuse scandalous goings-on. It was with righteous fury she spread her own in-

dignation into the village cauldron of seething home brew.

She said Alma even slept in the room with the patient. Not in the same bed, Martha admitted. She set up a folding cot in the room and said she couldn't leave the patient alone at night. Such infamy in her own home was more than Martha's virtue could endure. She'd have the law on any man that would disgrace a honest hard-working woman's house — even with her sister being the nurse that took care of him.

The delectable role Martha dramatized so effectively for herself was abruptly terminated by the arrival of a young soldier carrying a suit-case.

"I have come to see Dr. Miller's patient," he said. "And the nurse. Are you the nurse?"

Martha eyed him with cold suspicion. He was a handsome young man but she was not to be innocently dragged into a situation of doubtful propriety. But before she could answer Alma called from the upper hall

"Won't you come up? The patient is here."

The soldier leaped past Martha taking two steps at a time, and he quickly entered the sick room. Without a word he knelt by the bed and tenderly kissed the pale face on the pillow. There was a gasping joyful cry.

"Donnie — Oh my Donnie." Alma made no effort to interrupt a long, long embrace.

When the handsome young soldier

came gaily down the stairs Martha was glumly silent as he said cheerfully

"You have been awfully good, I appreciate it so much." She softened a bit when he added, "I want to pay you for your trouble. I brought some fresh clothing and now I'll take the patient home with me."

"Oh — then you know the sick gentleman?"

He appeared momentarily puzzled with Martha's question. Then his eyes twinkled as he answered, "Yes — all my life." He added gently, "You see the sick gentleman — "

He was interrupted by steps on the stair. Martha's eyes bulged with incredulity and her garrulous complaints were choked into helpless silence. She and the soldier watched the patient slowly descending firmly supported by Alma's strong arms — a radiantly happy patient with softly waving gray hair, clad in becoming feminine dress, with new joy in her eyes and a new found strength.

Then the soldier concluded:

"You see, the sick gentleman is my mother."

Helen L. Waterhouse  
Tacoma Yacht Club  
Tacoma 6, Washington

### MAESTRO OF SEA MUSIC

Night-music, played by the wakeful waters,  
Comes attuned to more than music masters . . .  
Lullabies from the heart of the ancient mother;  
Tuneless dirges mourning the unborn weather;  
Little rippling notes of summer laughter . . .  
Tinkling bits of star-shapes tumbling after . . .

But drums are rolled in the surf along the sea-shore,  
Muffled with soughs and sighs . . . with secret waiting  
The maddened moment . . . the wind's crescendo . . .  
The white-haired maestro wielding his great baton.

Corinne Sherman  
4 East 62nd Street  
New York 21, New York

### NOVEMBER SPRING

We met in country wearied of bright hues,  
brown days when wind drove patient, brittle leaves  
and scolding sparrows similarly brown  
above the russet sheaves.

We walked down to the roughened bay and saw  
old sea dogs limping slowly on the quay,  
still feeling time slip through them like a tide  
at ebb reluctantly.

We were not young and thought our hearts were dull  
after the pageantry of passion passed;  
but in a half ironic sunset gleam  
there woke a Spring — to last.

### LUNCHEON CONFERENCE

Eight of them around the table,  
all alert and keen;  
and all their secretaries know they won't be back  
for two good hours. One is jotting down  
some figures for the next man; two are deep  
in argument; one reads a long report  
to neighbors on his left and right; the eighth  
sits skeptically calm and bides his time.

Business is business, time is precious now,  
not to be wasted on a single hint  
at anything extraneous to the deal  
(soon to affect the lives of millions more  
than they can visualize) that brings them here.  
When just before they leave,  
paying too much for ill-digested food,  
a man brings out with pride a photograph  
of his first grandchild, all the rest are shocked  
that he should want to show such fatuousness.

Ella E. Preston  
1322 East Twelfth Street  
Davenport, Iowa

## SUPPOSE

Suppose  
the peak should break away,  
gray granite fall into  
    the slumbering lake  
displacing clouds and water  
    with one splash,  
drenching the flowery slopes  
    and hurrying down  
to fill the valley with harsh noise  
    and chill.

Suppose  
the mountain shrinks into a hill,  
the hill slumps down to sprawl  
    upon the plain.  
What dream will then remain  
to pull your heart toward heaven,  
O, mountain-conquering man?  
Suppose!

Pansy O. Alexander  
P. O. Box 161  
West Point, Indiana

## OCTOBER

Is made  
Of three frail things:  
Blue vapor on the hill,  
A sparrow in the maple's hair,  
Dark hush.

Eleanor Foote Soderbeck  
734 West Franklin Street  
Jackson, Michigan

## THE SCARLET RAINCOAT

It happened one rainy night, as she stood on a street corner waiting for her bus. Usually the most inconspicuous of secretaries, tonight Alice was wearing a scarlet raincoat which had attracted her in a shop window. It made a bright spot of color in the dripping dusk. Suddenly she was conscious of someone standing beside her, and looked up into a pair of dark eyes regarding her appraisingly. The man smiled down at her.

"You make a brave showing this gloomy day," he said, "as though a flower had bloomed, a poppy, perhaps."

Alice smiled back, and felt a thrill of pure pleasure. What a nice thing for him to say! She was glad she had bought the coat, although it was more than she could afford. Her bus came along just then, and she boarded it, miraculously finding a seat. "It must be my lucky night," she thought.

When she reached her small apartment, Alice found herself humming as she hung her coat carefully away. The sense of warmth which came with the stranger's words still lingered. When she had made tea, and set out the rest of her meal, she lighted the yellow candle she kept on her desk, and put it in the center of the card table. Switching off the electric light, she ate in the

soft glow. Life suddenly seemed good, her job less monotonous. Perhaps the city was not as heartless a place as she had thought.

The next night, as she waited at the corner, she thought of the tall stranger. Did he wait there every night, too, she wondered? Would she know him again? All she had noticed was his height, and his dark eyes. She found herself glancing curiously at all the men. But the one she looked for was not there. She felt somewhat disappointed as she stepped on the bus and went home.

Before setting the table, Alice hunted through a drawer for a lunch cloth with a yellow border. It would look well with the candle. As she ate, she remembered her plans when she first came to the city. She had intended to keep her apartment attractive, and always use her pretty things. It had become easier not to bother to set the table, but to snatch a bite from the kitchen shelf. When she finished eating, she lifted the candle, and went to look at herself in the wall mirror. Her hair needed a permanent, and she has become careless with make-up. That wasn't the way she had planned it, either. Perhaps she should take some of the money she had been saving for a vacation trip and fix herself up a little.

It was a week later that a sudden thought came to Alice. If she did meet the tall man again, he wouldn't know her, without the bright coat. In her dark suit she looked a different person. When she awoke the next morning to the sound of rain on her window, she felt a thrill of hope. Now she had an excuse to wear her raincoat.

A radiant Alice waited for the bus that night. She had spent her lunch hour shopping for a cocky red rain hat. Her lipstick was carefully applied. There was just the right touch of color on her cheeks. Her eyes were sparkling and drew more than one admiring look. But there was no sign of the tall man, although Alice let one bus go by.

"Oh, well," she said to herself, as she hurried home from her bus stop. "I can keep myself always ready. I might meet him any time, or someone interesting." She thought fleetingly of the new young man in the office. He had given her a more than casual glance when she had met him in the hall on her way out tonight. He had dark eyes, too, and broad shoulders. As she went up the steps of her apartment house, her head was high.

Two hundred miles away, David Marston was telling his wife about his trip to New York. He finished his tale of the successful business deal, and the

plays he had seen, along with Jean's excellent apple pie.

"And now, Mrs. Marston," he said, "if you will come into the living room until I open my bag, I will show you what I brought for you."

"A present!" cried Jean. "What is it?"

"Now just calm yourself while I get it. You'll see."

Jean was sitting on the edge of her chair when David came back with a scarlet raincoat on his arm. He spread it out for her inspection.

"I saw a coat like this on a girl one night in the rain, and I thought it was the prettiest raincoat I had ever seen. It looked like a flower blossoming. I hunted all over to find this one for you."

"It is beautiful, David." Jean smoothed the soft fabric. Putting it on, she turned before him. "It fits beautifully, too. The girl who wore the other one must have been attractive. I never knew you to get poetic over a raincoat before. Tell me, what was she like?"

David frowned a little. "When I saw the coat, I saw you in it," he said slowly. "I thought how gay you would look, walking beside me in the rain. Why—the girl who had it on, I haven't the faintest idea what she was like."



Samuel M. Sargent  
Box 28  
Vista, Missouri

### EVENING OF A FARM

Under the trees,  
Oaks branching,  
Thickly branching,  
The full darkness of a summer night  
Under the oaks by the farmhouse.

The door sends a parallelogram,  
A shining rectangle,  
Across the black.

Everything is black under the oaks.  
Everything but the door's bright band.

From the darkness of before birth  
Into the light,  
Bright band of life across the universe.  
A step . . . a few steps . . .  
Sixty . . . eighty . . . ninety. . . .

As the shadows close  
Will it be so frightening?

Rather,  
Will there not be restfulness of shadows?  
Friendliness of shadows?  
Will we not say:  
"Why, here we are . . . here on the path home . . . ?"

## GLIMPSE FROM A VILLAGE IN WINTER

The loaded freights,  
Long and loaded;  
Arrows from the giant industrial archer  
Aimed to the heart of trade.

Jolting the icy town.  
Spurning the red brick station,  
The leaf-stripped trees,  
The winter-bleak buildings.  
Over the earthen elevated,  
Over the underpass.

The little bobbing caboose,  
The laden flats,  
Stockcars and boxcars,  
Tankers, wheeled submarines,  
Heavy with oil;  
And the black, ambitious animal of steel,  
Fire-lunged,  
With one white eye.

Pushing East,  
Driving West,  
Over the underpass,  
Roaring over.

Into the sharp, grey twilight of winter,  
Into the wide, wide skylines of America,  
Into horizons roaring . . .  
The loaded freights.

Dorothy Cowles Pinkney  
177 Rowayton Avenue  
Rowayton, Connecticut

## HOW DAWN CAME ONCE ON RAILROAD STREET

The newslines had the scene complete,  
How dawn was coming greely,  
How the ashcans stood on curbs,  
Truck creaked down Railroad Street.  
The rubbishman, his daily  
Round just about begun,  
In spotted jeans and squaretoed homely shoes  
Swung out and took his jump,  
Gripped a bent can, stood wrenching at its lid,  
Getting ready to hoist and dump . . .  
Imagine his pale disgust, his crass  
And powerful arm struck still . . .  
Some muffled moving squawk, inside  
Crammed paper bundles . . .  
Imagine the barefleshed mass  
Unfolding its arms and legs, its tininess like his,  
And how the rubbishman froze,  
Or possibly paused to spit:  
*I'll chuck this job, I will!*  
*By God, I'll chuck it fast!*  
In day's new dreadful sun  
Remembering fugitive girls,  
Remembering things he'd done,  
But he wasn't guilty this time;  
He'd just quit.

The town's dry secrets stirred.  
Screaming the dark and dirty tale next day,  
The same respectable paper tied with string  
That wrapped the squawking bundle . . . Imagine  
the girl,  
Imagine the poor grim thing,  
Letting the pain push down,  
The living lump inside

Fight to get out;  
The sweat, the grunting silence, ignorant tears,  
The locked, unlighted room —  
Pa, Ma, the roomer might get wise —  
Did she touch the curled red fingers?  
Giddy, ferocious, shaken with cold furors,  
How did she stifle its faint live cries?  
Did she turn on the light for one scared wincing  
look  
Before she wrapped it up and crept outdoors?  
There's not a man in town who's not responsible,  
A woman who isn't ashamed,  
Not for the girl and what she did,  
But for the crawling cringing thought,  
No matter who gets blamed,  
Dishonor's out. A consequence we knew and hid  
Crashes across the headlines, too well named.

### MORNING MOON

Net me the morning moon,  
The morning moon adrift  
In shivering water, shattered  
Among the redveined jellyfish  
Of daytime, washed inshore  
Under the slimy docks. O, lift  
The landlocked moon of morning loose!  
Dip her on deck with some thin gaff,  
Morsel of bait, and clamp her to your  
side;  
I think she was I, that fallen disk,  
That paper lantern, torn across  
And scattered to the hard high tide  
Of how one looks to others.  
Net me the morning moon!  
Only a few soaked slivers,  
Some sinking soggy bits are left;  
Catch her in time to save her silver  
pride!

Abigail Ann Hamblen  
8 Barnes Road  
Newton, Massachusetts

### SPRINGTIME CAN BE ETERNITY

"Funny thing," Ellen said, sinking down on Peg's cot, tucking her long legs under her. "Funny thing," she said again, staring at the Grant Wood print on the wall, at the smooth ripe colors that were always so soothing.

"What's funny?" Peg dropped into the one armchair of the small dorm room. It was just after dinner on a Monday night. The study-period bell had not yet sounded, and they could hear laughter and high voices out in the hall. Girls drifted by the open door in twos and threes.

Ellen brushed her tawny hair back from her thin white face. "You mentioned Wentworth's course at the table. I've meant to tell you something kind of odd I heard this weekend when I went to Aunt Sarah's — up in Riverview. About Wentworth, I mean."

"Honest? Here, have a Lifesaver." Peg tossed the candy, Ellen caught it, and they settled themselves against cushions.

"Well, you know Riverview — population 3,105. Everyone knows everyone else, and my parents took me there summers for years. And you know I told you that I transferred here to college this year so I could be near there and go see Aunt Sarah sometimes on weekends, while Mother and Dad are in Europe. It's a sort of second home, Riverview is."

"Um," nodded Peg. "But what's funny? And how does Wentworth come into it?" She rolled her eyes. "Love that man!"

"Well . . ." Ellen leaned on her elbow, glancing at her watch. "Funny isn't really the right word for it . . ." Seven o'clock, she thought. Philip would be just going on duty over at the library, only a few steps away from the dormitory. His face would be grave, his eyes absorbed in his own thoughts as he brought books from the stacks, charged them, put away cards. And when she came in there would be that slow smile, that light that seemed to come from great depths . . .

Peg's voice brought her back to the cretonne-covered cushion, the Grant Wood print, the sharp taste of the Lifesaver. "Well, tell me. Let me judge how funny," said Peg.

Ellen straightened. "Anyhow, I went up there this weekend, and I had a grand time with Aunt Sarah, as usual. She's Grandma's younger sister, and she's great fun. And she's going to leave me her amethysts when she dies."

"Some gold-digger, aren't you?"

"No, just a realist. They're lovely — brooch, earrings, and dinner-ring. She was engaged once, and her man gave them to her — for a wedding present. He took sick the day before the wedding was to have been, the day he gave

them to her — and died." There was a pause. "Well, Saturday night we took in a cinema — I mean *the* cinema — there's only one in Riverview — Aunt Sarah and I. More fun! And afterwards we repaired to a drugstore to refresh the inner woman — chocolate marshmallow sundaes, with nuts." Ellen gave a little grin. "Like a couple of high-school kids."

She was silent a minute, her grey eyes large and thoughtful. "Up to our table came this perfectly gorgeous female. Out of *Vogue*. You know — suit tailored just so, with a nylon frill at the throat, and a little straw sailor with a big bow, and a charm bracelet that must have weighed five pounds. *And Chanel Number Five.* It was Eleanor Craigie. She grew up in Riverview. Her folks live there now, but she has some position in Chicago — I think she's a buyer for one of the big stores. This was the first weekend she's happened to be in Riverview when I was. She's about ten years older than I. I used to play with her little sister in the summers we spent there, and naturally I'd seen her around then, but she always seemed awfully grown-up, with her high heels and her lipsticks and her dates — when I was just a kid going fishing and learning to play tennis. Here she was in this brilliantly lit drugstore, sitting down in the booth with us, saying, 'Ellen! It's nice to see you!' Then she looked at me — honest, Peg, that look — I couldn't figure it out at first — so *intense* . . . "

"Go on," said Peg. "What did she want?"

"She'd heard I went to Winston, and she wanted to ask me about Dr. Wentworth. She said she'd known him — long ago. And so naturally I went on at a great rate, about how perfectly dreamy he was, with *what* a voice! And how his courses were simply fascinating, and how half the girls were *mad* about his curly hair, especially that lock that's always flopping down into his eyes. And so on. And she listened. Gad, how she listened! And she had that bright look in her eyes, as if I were showing her apple pie à la mode, and she was on a diet. Finally I ran down, and she left."

"After class today I stopped and told Dr. Wentworth about seeing her."

"Oh, *no . . .*" groaned Peg.

"Well, I thought he might be interested."

"I presume he was?" asked Peg, sweetly sarcastic.

"He just looked at me — then motioned me over to the side of the room and I swear he had the same look in his eyes — the same look, I mean, that *she'd* had — and he said, 'How is she? How did she seem?' Kind of — er — breathless, you know."

"I just stuttered out that she was very attractive — and he smiled, and said, 'Eleanor and I used to go together at the U . . .'"

"Fancy that. I trust the light broke for you?"

"I did sort of get the drift," admitted

Ellen. "But I could hardly get away from him — you could see he was just floundering for questions to ask. And afterwards it — it kind of *haunted* me. Along with Aunt Sarah and her amethysts, I guess . . ."

"Of course you know," observed Peg, "his wife presented him with twins just last week."

"I know." Ellen shifted her position against the pillow, and closed her eyes. The scent of new leaves and lilacs came in the open window, and with it a feeling of almost unbearable desolation. Philip. Philip. I suppose there's nothing we can do, she thought, nothing at all.

The minutes with him were so precious, those quick walks between classes, when something almost tangible seemed to hold them together, apart from the others. And there were stolen bits of time in the shadows of some campus building at night, when their lips, their bodies, clung. . . . When she was alone, studying in her room, or even when she was sitting in class, the memory of those moments would come, take possession, until her hands would shake, her eyes be blinded. . . .

He was poor. He was hideously poor. He really didn't get enough to eat; she knew that because she could see — anyone could see — that he'd lost a lot of weight this year. He overworked: too many jobs, plus keeping up his grades because he'd come here on a scholarship. Something burning stung her eyes, and she opened them angrily. "There's no

*sense* in things, anyhow," she said suddenly, harshly, getting up.

"Naturally not." Peg rose lazily. "But one must do one's trig, mustn't one?"

"I have to get over to the library to work on my term paper for American lit." Ellen moved toward the door.

"Tough, isn't it, kid?"

Ellen looked around. "I don't know what you mean."

"O.K. Be seeing you."

Ellen went down the corridor to her own room. She stared in the mirror as she combed her hair. Only a few steps through the gentle evening to the library, and there would be Philip. She could stay, with her papers and her reference books, until closing time, could sit at one of the tables, able to see him, knowing he was there, there in the same room. And then, in the sweet darkness by the corner of the library he would come to her, they would walk away together, and for only a little there would be a kind of fulfillment, their own. The eternity of the future had nothing to do with them. It was a chaos of poverty and hard work and family obligations which his deep, terrible pride would never permit her to share. But this was their spring, and it was eternal. Aunt Sarah had had nothing more, nor Eleanor Craigie. Just a single springtime.

She laid down her comb and reached for her notebook. She started toward the door, and her feet could not keep from running.

Margaret B. Purcell  
101 North Grand Avenue  
Pasadena, California

### THE BANYAN TREE

On the Island of Hawaii,  
exotic flowers grow,  
and send  
their rays of color to the skies by day.

Blossoms of evanescent beauty,  
they spend  
their pastel tints with wanton vigor,  
lifting their petals to each bird and sipping bee,  
envying the ugly permanence of the Banyan Tree.

The Banyan Tree, with its twisted trunk,  
like a man with a twisted soul,  
stands in rachis rigor,  
wishing a great, deep hole  
would open and close a brown greedy mouth,  
and swallow it down, like a mole.

The flowers invite entreatingly,  
their perfume smothers the Banyan Tree;  
but it stands aloof, looking toward the sea,  
and weeps inside, as it longingly,  
aches for their beauty's fragility.

The flowers flutter despairingly,  
they wave, and beckon the Banyan Tree;  
but it stands in frigid rigidity.

The flowers utter  
one bitter, defeated cry —  
at the pattern of beauty its withered limbs,  
etch on the tropic sky.

And the winds of the world blow by.

Edward V. Craddock  
915 West Highland Street  
Denton, Texas

### A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

Sleep now? . . . Not while the night awakes  
and night's subsonic orchestra tunes  
its frail strings, and grass-blade oboes drop  
cool globes of sound, like elfin moons.

Sleep now? . . . Not while mad branches tap  
on a wet window, not while the owl tells  
his cryptic wisdom to the ancient hills  
and insects tick their secrets in brittle syllables.  
That thin reed-question, that dew-liquid note  
almost too piercing-pitched for human ear,  
only those half-daft ones who listen to the leaf  
and know the 'cello score of trees can hear.

### RICH WIDOW

The shop girls flashed their neon smiles at her  
the customer is always right tattooed across their minds,  
they balanced heavy bolts and hung up dresses  
made good the spotty apple, got her a cleaner fork  
and when she left were dazed to find the sales so small.

Her hedge was high  
her window shades were always down  
and even on the sidewalk you could smell the moth balls.  
The paper boy knew better than to aim *The Daily* at her porch,  
he rang the bell  
then waited there politely quite a while.

Soft-soled, camphored and umbrellaed  
she was ubiquitous  
until she had her stroke.  
Now neighbors bearing flowers and cookies  
are quite content to leave them with the starchy nurse.

Sara King Carleton  
157 East 72nd Street  
New York, New York

### MOVING WEST

The street was nothing to boast —  
three saloons and mud,  
a horse tied to a hitching post,  
smell of fear and blood.

It had been hot on the plain,  
on the covered wagon perch,  
greasy with sweat and lack of rain;  
ant-hill hours; the lurch

of heavy wheels through the dust,  
through buffalo grass and clay  
left only the will to survive: the *must*,  
day after plodding day.

Now, as we run through grain  
that bends and sways in the breeze  
on the swiftly moving, powerful train  
by sparkling water, by trees,  
we remember the bitter load,  
cattle and driven men  
on that far-west, desert-hungry road  
as we take that road again.

When we come to stations at night  
where the engines steam and throb  
and men with electric torches light  
each to each other's job,  
we feel their friendship, we think:  
was it really ever so?  
the hate, the dirt, the despair, the stink,  
here where we smoothly go

past cities ordered and neat  
that grew to such great renown  
from a little, narrow, evil street,  
from a sprawling prairie town.

Lilith Lorraine  
Alpine, Texas

### CALLING ALL COWARDS

You who have sensed the black, tremendous lie  
That old men mutter while the young men die,  
May rest assured beneath your spangled sky,  
That if you speak before the light has fled,  
    God will not strike you dead.

Since Jesus lashed the thief, forgave the whore,  
Since Luther nailed the devil to the door,  
Since Patrick Henry drowned the lion's roar,  
You may take heart that though the skies burn red,  
    God will not strike you dead.

The king walks naked for each child to see,  
Clothed only by your fears in majesty,  
And though, evoked by wiles and witchery,  
A skeleton in armor haunts your bed,  
    God will not strike you dead.

We who defy the serpent and his spawn,  
Assure you that the poison fangs are drawn,  
And but for you the world would face the dawn,  
And though the vultures wheel above your head,  
    God will not strike you dead.

There will be legions at your beck and call,  
If you but man the last embattled wall,  
And lift the tattered banners as they fall,  
And rally all the fools who turned and fled,  
    God will not strike you dead.

Rebecca Richmond  
P. O. Box 1094  
Chautauqua, New York

### SAMARITAN

When Arthur Meade hung out a doctor's sign  
beside his office door in Pottersville,  
the women asked each other, "Isn't he  
that farmer's boy who used to sell us corn  
on market days? — the same red hair, blue eyes,  
and what a color — wasted on a man!"  
From boyhood he had planned that doctor's sign;  
he hated suffering in anything.

Men liked and women trusted him, but what  
amazed him were the pretty girls. He knew  
he laughed too loud, his ties and shoes were cheap,  
and yet the girls were always asking him  
to dances or some other gay affair.  
He thought of them as butterflies that flew  
around his head in summer on the farm,  
inviting, "Catch us if you can!" But Maud,  
among them all, "the Princess" to her friends,  
wooed him most delicately — and won him too.  
She brought him to her house (her second love)  
and married Arthur to it with herself.  
She taught him how to wear his evening clothes  
and how to let the servants wait on him.  
"Darling!" he laughed. "You're always so correct.  
D'you think I'll ever learn your fol-de-rol,  
your pretty manners?" "You will learn," she smiled.  
He bounded down the steps when we went out —  
the calls were urgent — and was slow to see  
how glad he was to leave some things behind.  
At least, Maud's fortune left him free to care  
for those whose thanks were all his recompense.

One patient gave him gratitude — and more;  
a wan-faced girl out on the edge of town  
with foreign accent no one recognized.  
Her husband was a dull, mouse-colored man  
whom she had borne two mousey-colored boys.  
Her third had ruddy hair and bright blue eyes.  
"The Princess" was the princess still; her friends  
might guess how much she knew, but that was all.  
The Doctor turned from them; there was no lack  
of work among the ailing poor — thin hands  
stretched out, dependent on the strength of his.

"You're worn out, Arthur," Maud said, putting down  
her after-dinner coffee cup. "You drive  
yourself too hard. Can't you stay home tonight?"  
"I'm sorry, dear — it's that old scamp who does  
odd jobs for us, when he's not drunk." They rose.  
Suddenly he said, "We're always so polite."  
She answered, "Well — that's something. — Isn't it?"  
Their glance was straight and long and very tired.

The patient lived two flights above a store.  
The doctor took the dim and narrow stair  
as though it were a summit to be climbed.  
There was a nurse in charge. She said, "I think  
he's better, Doctor." "I'll wait and be quite sure."  
The nurse returned within a quarter hour.  
"Doctor," she whispered, "he is resting well.  
His skin is moist. — Poor man, you're sound asleep."  
She bent above him for a moment, then  
turned from the bed and crowded back her cry.

And some will tell you of the bright haired child,  
and some will tell you how the Doctor died.



## ON DARTMOOR

Nicholas Brown came onto the moor  
With a mind alert and an eager eye,  
His dungarees, and an ordnance map  
And he bought him a compass to guide him by.

Nicholas meant the moor should yield  
The story of thirty centuries' span.  
He trod the fields and he climbed the hills  
To seek the dwellings of Bronze Age man.

Nicholas looked for artifacts  
Of Celt and Saxon, and liked to scale  
The rugged tors where he could view  
The winding line of a pack horse trail.

Nicholas also specialized  
In old tin mines by streams and ridges,  
Churches of medieval times,  
And filled a notebook on "clapper" bridges.

The moor to him was an "artifact",  
A boon to a budding scientist;  
But he paused one day by a granite cross  
A bit uneasy — what had he missed?

He paused by a cross on the Abbots' Way  
Weathered and worn like an ancient tree.  
No more the abbots were riding the moor  
But the cross stood pledged to eternity.

Yet Nicholas saw — or didn't he see?  
And Nicholas heard — but could he be sure?  
It was only the cloud that shadowed the Way,  
The voice of the wind on the heathery moor.

But Nicholas shivered, for Nicholas knew,  
I know," he whispered, "but have no dread.  
Those who have given their hearts to the moor,  
They will return to it when they are dead

As truly as rain falls into the sea,  
As leaves to the earth on their wind blown track."  
And Nicholas said — addressing whom? —  
Nicholas said, "I am coming back."

Ryah Tumarkin Goodman  
15 Hancock Road  
Brookline, Massachusetts

### AFTERTHOUGHT

After the stated thought, the afterthought  
Casts an afterglow of an intenser gleam  
Upon the silken, silent stream.  
Here is the tone articulate,  
The sound a shadow to the thought,  
As light and shade from single root begot.

How close allied the echo to the sound,  
The stillness to the imaged resonance.  
Beyond the image, louder the utterance  
Unspoken, as an afterglow reflecting radiance  
After light had smoldered to a frosted sound.

### DAY AMONG DAYS

Day among days, this is the day begotten  
In a dream when all the caterpillar hours  
Burst from the cocoon of doubt like flowers  
From sleeping seeds. In this beguiling glen  
The bud of day shall bloom  
Into a bright hibiscus plume  
Or thistle-tufted ball of brilliant hue.

This is the sapphire blue  
Of day when asters, marigolds of sun  
Are bellflowers, bluebells strewn on the lagoon  
Of time. The hours are dahlias, hyacinths all blue,  
All blue, the same unending hue  
On sycamore and maple leaf have lavendered the sky  
A deeper blue than ever darkened the Italian sky.

Day among days, such days I have begotten  
In a dream that waking dreamed the dream  
Awake, more real than the imagined glen  
Wherein the morning bloom had burned into a plume  
Of noon, bright, bright, amid the midnight  
Musings of the mind's nocturnal light.

Jennie Brown Rawlins  
Route 2  
Rigby, Idaho

## FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE PACIFIC

When first I saw the surging, swelling reaches,  
The wild heart-beat that churned its depths to foam,  
The plunges toward escape along the beaches,  
The frenzied thrusts against its prison home,  
I stood eyes fixed, scarce breathing, filled with wonder  
At such magnificence, held captive by  
A strand of sandy beach, the flexed earth under,  
And up above, a sheer blue Dresden sky.

## I KNOW AN ISLAND

I know an island, fortified by shores  
Of jutting stone; its mist-hung mountains rise  
Like ancient altars, suppliant to the skies;  
A wind washed clean by storm and sea, explores  
Its cauls and caverns, and its ponds and weirs  
(Where flows from melting snows wait their release)  
And mingles with elysian tones of peace,  
Not too attenuate for human ears.  
But there are some who beat their chests and cry  
"This is my life," and leave; and time goes by:  
They spurn the place where they as children strayed  
And kneel at the feet of strange new gods, late-risen,  
And pledge their troth with wormwood, or with gall,  
For some will learn too late or not at all,  
The island is a haven, not a prison.

Olive Carman  
30 Mt. Pleasant Street  
Winchester, Massachusetts

## FUTURE

The present puts possession on that land  
the moment travels on.  
It owns the road but not the journey,  
nor can it stand  
within an unbuilt city without a name.  
"The past may burn in every moment,"  
but the future is unkindled flame.  
This day that maps the course  
cannot command  
an unseen city wall  
nor touch it with a hand.

## WOODLAND STREAM

Into the black mirror of the woodland,  
Heaven smiles,  
smiles into the dark stream,  
searches glassy depths that open down  
below the rocky bed.

As long as Day lingers over the mossy ledge  
water woos the light  
downward to unfathomed spaces.

Nightly Day turns her face away  
leaving upon the mirror  
only the black surface of a shallow stream.

Yet shall shadowed thought be never flowing  
so far into the dark  
but day begun  
may pierce below the surface of our knowing  
into inner depths of sun.

Colby Cleveland  
277 West 261st Street  
New York 71, New York

## COLLEAGUES

At half-past five she shuffles in,  
Raddled, unkempt, forlorn, shapelessly old —  
What horrors she attempts to drown in gin  
No one has asked and she has never told.

The tall, fair, gently spoken youth  
Comes later — but he comes as though on cue;  
With his first glass he grasps the final truth —  
Courtly, salutes her, knowing it her due.

After this chivalry he will  
Devote himself to brandy, thinking yet  
"O happy hag with just the past to kill  
While I the whole wide future must forget."

## CHAOS ETERNAL

In the beginning was the word  
out of the warm primeval slime  
came a harsh guttural croak;  
at an unrecorded point in time  
what was voiceless spoke.

And the cosmic silence ended  
drowned in reverberating cacaphony  
while men — once happy inarticulate fools —  
struggled to forge through verbal alchemy  
reliable tools.

Mary Word Elliott  
3404 Altamont Road  
Birmington 5, Alabama

## WITHIN A WIDENING WORLD

Driven out of Eden, Eve  
Walked with the taste of bitterness  
Like dried blood on her lips;  
Adam, at her side,  
Moved hang-dog, dull.  
Now, on the pathway to become  
First mother of man,  
She felt herself grow small  
Within a widening world  
And turned a last reluctant look  
On Paradise.  
She saw the angel's sword extend  
In rainbow flame  
Above the gate marked EXIT —  
Knew all too well that it was set  
In covenant between the three:  
God, Adam and herself . . .  
Stumbling among the unaccustomed stones,  
Aware of Adam's  
Anguish as he fled,  
She joined her hand with his  
And took one resolute,  
Swift step toward womanhood:  
"Come, then; we'll hurry on and see  
What lies beyond!" she cried.

## VALEDICTION

One night last week brought crucial frost;  
Then all the treeland leafage lost  
    Its transient green.  
Each maple now is scarlet dressed,  
Or wears a flashy yellow vest  
    Of velveteen;  
Four tawny oaks from parchment hill  
Toss goodbyes on the window sill;  
    A willow drops  
Her claret leaves beside the pool,  
And sumacs playing royal fool  
    Wave sceptered tops . . .  
What solace that departure be  
A splendor in each shrub and tree —  
    The end appear  
Bright colorama for the eyes  
Against blue, celebrative skies.  
    Can hearts hold fear  
When we observe the woods unfold  
Triumphant grace in growing old?

## INVITATION TO WALPURGIS NIGHT

Out of the caves where dead hopes rest  
Like eyeless fish in abysmal seas;  
Out of the gloom where the harpies nest,  
I poured stale wine and drank the lees.  
I saw the shadows rise and form  
Faces and figures twisted awry;  
Thunderous night ejected its swarm,  
And you came galloping by . . .  
You, with the eyes, the lips, the hair  
Memory knew for my torturer.  
Smiling, you beckoned upon the air,  
Bidding me join in the riotous stir.  
"Dissolve to your hell, Asmodeus," I wailed.  
I grappled the wind; I clung to the stars.  
"The Sabbath you dance forever has failed —  
By the broom we once rode, the invisible scars."

Rockwell B. Schaefer  
1501 Broadway  
New York 36, New York

## EXPERIENCE

Indifferent to the whipping rain  
And thorny brambles thrusting pain,  
I struggled up the slippery slope  
Abandoning all sense and hope.  
In search of an unyielding fate  
Who frowned at love and smiled at hate.  
Exhausted, weary and unkempt  
Frustrated — I had never dreamt  
That fate's unkindness could expose  
Such depth of fury and impose  
A blind restraint on ecstasy,  
Thank pain for bringing sanity.  
The rains have ceased and wounds congealed  
Exhaustion's ravages have healed;  
But scars and memories remain  
Fate's fears will storm but strike in vain.

Rachel Graham  
3 Griffin Road  
Clinton, New York

## ADOLESCENT

Midafternoon a racing small wind  
lifted clouds between the sun and hills,  
and set matching shadows running lightly  
over spruce and hemlock points.

With young shoulders  
stealing farm moments  
beside the old birch tree,  
the lad's curtained eyes watched  
flying skirts and skimming slippers  
as they whirled  
over the evergreen ridges,  
saw in fluttering orchard petals  
dainty ankles in a tip-toe dance  
through the open gate —

Her perfume closed his lids  
and caught his breath —

James Binney  
503 Marshall Drive  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

### BITTERN AS SYMBOL

A lusty bittern lives because of love  
and sings himself — how marvelous he is;  
his dullest notes sweet music to his ears,  
he thinks the marshland melodies are his.

He flies above the marshes, swooping low,  
a solitary monster, with his eyes  
alert for snakes and helpless little frogs,  
and now he dips to where the victim lies,  
and stiffening for a moment, unashamed,  
he catches up a reptile in his bill,  
claws viciously, and flings it to the ground,  
and loves the mangling better than the kill.

And now he yawps a love song to himself  
for strength and cleverness and right to rule;  
he utters notes no other birds can love  
and preens his ugly body, plays the fool,  
and thinks himself a god above the marsh,  
and now he sings, and, oh, the voice is harsh.

Bernice Ames  
12223 Dunoon Lane  
Los Angeles 49, California

### IN THIS SUSPENSION

In this suspension which is life  
I swing, chained to time.  
Color blows through me  
as clouds drift down bright currents of sun.  
The flame  
that twists and shapes me into the only truth  
is love,  
leaning on the wiles of the wind for strength  
until I become all flame  
And burn from this life to the next  
curling warmth over shells in my path.

*In May this year at the annual creative awards assembly at Knox College, Joshua C. Taylor of the Department of Art, University of Chicago was the featured speaker. Mr. Taylor also acted as judge and critic in the Edward G. Blonder art contest. His remarks were particularly focused on the paintings and prints in the 1956 Blonder contest, but like Sydney Harris' speech in 1955 and Professor William Wilson's advice to young writers the year before, Mr. Taylor's script seems worthy of a wider audience. Though he spoke without notes, a tape recording of his talk was made and edited by Mr. Taylor. Further revised and abridged by the editor his talk is presented here for Bookfellows and STEP LADDER readers.*

### THE ARTIST AND HIS TIME

. . . this afternoon you are going to have a chance to see a great many paintings. They are very good paintings, I think, and, furthermore, they are by members of your own community. That, to me, is important. They are by people who know the same things you do, think similar things, live in the same place. This fact you should not overlook. . . .

What would worry me would be to hear some of you say, "Well, I think it's nice to have all of these pictures around, of course, but what has it got to do with me? I'm not an art major," and with that, to see you disappear into the sanctuary of your own particular field. Of course, I hope there will be many of you who will just like the pictures as much as I do and simply enjoy them.

This question, "What do these pictures have to do with me?", or, to put it on a more general level, "What does art have to do with me, with our time?" is, you know, a very important one. It is very clear, I'm sure that an artist does not paint only for other artists, or just for himself, any more than an engineer builds bridges to have them crossed only by other engineers. I think that the artist does paint for a public, even though sometimes he is rather coy about admitting it. And if he does concern himself with a wider public, we have good reason to ask why it is that we keep hearing these questions "what does it mean?" "why does he do it?" or encounter the angry comment, "I can't understand it and it's just not worth the effort!" It is interesting to note, too, that when people make such remarks they do it with conviction; they get angry. It is as though they feel the artist has an obligation, that the artist should do something special. But, if these critics are pressed to explain what that something special is, it usually turns out that the artist ought to "express his time," or he ought to serve society, or he ought to paint "beautiful pictures." And they seem self-righteously sure that the artist is not doing any of these things.

. . . I should like to point out that probably more people see more art today than ever before; that we are forced to be more conscious of art today than at any time in the past. It doesn't matter what magazine you pick up, you are likely to find reproductions of paintings, and they are likely to be contemporary

paintings. And all the way across the country you will find museums that have collections not only of past but of modern art, and people go to look at it. They might not like what they see, of course, but even the fact that they don't like it makes for wonderful conversation. Yet they look at it, and they don't have to be Medicis to do so. . . .

We are likely to assume that all art at all times has had the same goal; for example, that all artists have wanted to imitate the appearances of things. We sometimes imagine that everyone painting a landscape has always wanted to reproduce the effect of sunshine and all other natural phenomena — wanted to paint trees as trees. But, of course, this does not happen to be the case. The whole problem of painting out-of-doors, of painting space — even of being conscious of it — is a fairly new one. It was only in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century that man even became convinced that it was worth trying to do. But in the fourteenth century the artist did become aware that there was something that he hadn't taken account of before. There was, for example, the puzzle of depth — when you looked at things you saw them in space. Now if you will think of what such an idea might mean to people who had never thought about space before, I think you can understand that it was a rather revolutionary notion. Of course, today our ideas of space are rather more complicated than theirs, having to do with space ships and all of that sort of thing. But just think for a moment: supposing you had been content to perpetuate in art certain organizations of forms, certain ideas which had been handed down to you for a great many years, and then one day you looked out of the window and discovered that there was a whole new visual world that up until then you had missed. It might come upon you as rather a shock, so great a shock that you might even be reduced to a state in which you could no longer paint. Once you admit the possibility of the extensibility of nature, of depth, that one dimension which we cannot fully measure and control, you may lose yourself in it. The visual world becomes a chaos, and that which has been order in art would seem no longer relevant, no longer possible. It was necessary for the artists of the fifteenth century so faced with this new realm of experience to discover in it an order. Of course our artist could have taken the easy way out and shut himself back up in the studio to try to forget that view out of the window, and continued painting the same kind of pictures his grandfather had painted. But I hardly think we could respect such an artist, such a man, who could be confronted with knowledge and then turn his back on it. And the adventurous painters of the fifteenth century did not turn their backs on their new awareness, but developed within it an order which allowed them to comprehend the chaos of sense in terms of reason. They developed what we call perspective, not in order to render an illusion of something, but in order to measure, to discover the harmony in our experience of sight, the new experience which had somehow to be absorbed. It was the artist's problem, then, to take the new sensory experience of his time, to face the new chaos, and to produce from it that which was equivalent to the old order.

Now what was necessary for this? The artist had first of all to be a man

of his time, to be conscious of the new perception. He had then to be artist enough to recreate within the new terms the art which had been destroyed, so to speak, by the new vision.

As I have suggested, such a concept of space as that of the fifteenth century man would seem today very outdated indeed. We don't even think in the same way. To accept it as our own view would be quite as naive, I suppose, as to try to explain the theories of Einstein in terms of Euclidian geometry; you simply would not get very far. But I am afraid that many people today try still to look at paintings through fifteenth century eyes. . . .

It is often said that art draws on its environment, that an artist should work from his surroundings. Many, I am sure, would believe this quite completely and go on to describe the environment in terms of the house in which the artist has been brought up, or possibly the town in which the house exists, or the country which contains the town. But I should like to point out that there is another environment that is very important to the way we think and judge, to the way we live. It is the environment of the mind. We have become aware that not only do we have a rational, reasoning mind, but that there exists another area of the mind which lies beyond it, affecting everything we do and everything we think. This less defined environment strongly affects our judgments whether they be reasonable or irrational. We can no longer believe that a profile designates the true character of a man. Man has become for us a great complex of interacting and unresolvable forces. Here we have, I believe, the new awareness, the new chaos, that the contemporary thinker, the contemporary artist, faces much as the painter of the fifteenth century faced the chaos of space.

But, you may say, if this underlies the mind, if this is something buried deep within and can't be seen, what good is it to the visual arts? Art must communicate, after all, and artists must use communicable means. But let's stop for just a moment to consider how actually we look at a painting, just what happens when we confront a work of art. Supposing we take as our example one of those works of art which I am sure you particularly delight in, you know, with a blotch of orange here and a splatter of blue there and a few angry lines and violent contrasts. You look at the work and at once sense this anger and violence, you sense its fight. Then your better self gets the upper hand, and you draw yourself up to your full righteous height and say scornfully, "What is it?" Then by matching the lines with other things you have seen you try to figure out what the painting means. But, you see, it's too late now. You have missed its meaning. At that moment in which you sensed the violence, the anger, in which you were engaged in the stirring emotional reaction, you were entering into communication with the artist who had also sensed these feelings and had embodied them in the forms on his canvas. If you wish to discover meaning, go back and examine that experience to which the artist has given form. This kind of experience is not to be belittled. It is an experience which I believe is important to the artist and to our time.

One hears very often that the artist, in becoming conscious of this inner aspect of man, of the workings of his own mind, has isolated himself, much

As we all isolate ourselves when we become more and more conscious of that which happens within. It is very true that in such a state we can no longer depend for genuine communication on that which is objective to us, that which is outside. Our evaluation of the response within our own minds is too great. And it is true that the artist is threatened with a kind of isolation, that lonely isolation which many tell us is characteristic of modern society. But we should realize that this isolation is overcome at the moment in which you have joined the artist in his innermost feelings, in his innermost thought. The artist can succeed, if you would but give him the chance, of establishing a reassuring bond not on the impersonal level of objects, but on a level which is far more deeply human, far more a part of the consciousness of our time.

But this consciousness, you see, is one which depends on our participation. Not only the artists must be men of their time, but also their audience. There must be a sympathetic community formed, otherwise we miss that knowledge which is essential to us as progressive human beings.

So, to summarize briefly, to get back to that question I posed, that handy opposition of the aspect which changes and that which remains the same: the thing that changes is our experience, the confines of our environment, and with it our values. The values which we set up in the metaphor of one age are regularly destroyed with the metaphor which supported them. So we must constantly recreate our values as we go along. To remain in the same place is to go backwards. . . .

That which changes is that aspect of life which produces constantly something new to be organized. What remains the same is our need for order, for comprehension; the fulfillment of this becomes, I think, the eternal content of a work of art. The artist offers his time, then, a sense of order within that chaos which characterizes the particular moment, an order available to all those who will participate in it with him.

Such a concept of art imposes a kind of obligation. First of all an obligation on the artist that he be a whole man, a part of his time, and that as such he be absolutely true to himself. If he is indeed a man of his time, to be true to himself is to be true also to others. But it imposes also an obligation on the audience: that they be willing to participate in the creation of the new scheme; that they recognize the complexities of their new environment and be therefore sympathetic to an ordering of it.

The true artist does not ask for patronage, he asks, instead, for participation. But then, you say, what is the value of participating, why bother? I said a moment ago that through the work of art we entered into a kind of community. Now you might have thought of the word community in terms of a town, an external ordering of houses or people. I did not mean the word in that sense. I meant it, rather, in the sense of communication, suggesting an ordering of people from within. The artist offers us a chance to join with one another as men of our time on a profoundly human level. He makes it possible for us, in other words, to join a far more human race. The work of art, it seems to me, serves as our passport.

## BOOKFELLOW NOTES

### BOOKS RECEIVED

- *White Fox*, by Elizabeth Alsop Shepard (New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, \$3.00). Lyrics, songs and sonnets by a talented Bookfellow. Dedicated to the poet Leslie Nelson Jennings, the poems are grouped around the themes "Four Seasons, Down East, Titan City, Abstractions, and Identity."
- *Starward*, by Margie B. Boswell (Published by the author, Arlington, Texas). Lyric verse, some of which has appeared in the STEP LADDER, published for friends by an always capable and sincere poet.
- *Pebbles in the Sun*, by Margaret G. Hindes (Privately printed, San Francisco, California, \$2.75). For sale at the Cottage Bookshop, 1424 Fourth Street, San Rafael, California. A beautifully composed and printed volume.
- *Wit, Humor and the Comic in Shakespeare and Elsewhere*, a literary analysis, by A. Haire Forster (New York, The William-Frederick Press 50¢). An essay with illustrations by a former professor of Hellenistic Greek at Seabury-Western in Evanston, Illinois.
- *Dodecahedron*, collected poems, by Jean Pierre Barricelli (New York, Vantage Press, \$2.50). The book's underlying philosophy — "man's duty in the world is similar to the poet's, who sets things to music; man sets things to the Ideal, despite the discordances and evil which discourage and even exhaust his efforts."
- *Three Shades of Blue*, by James K. Anthony (New York, Vantage Press, \$2.00). Brief, moving lyrics. The author is an assistant professor of geography at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- *Poems of Love and Wit*, by Laura Luck (Boston, Bruce Humphries, Inc., \$2.75). Shrewd, sometimes flippant, "little poems written to bring many smiles to their readers."
- *Christmas Poems*, by Ethan W. Pearson (New York, Vantage Press, \$2.00). A teacher of piano and organ in Somersworth, New Hampshire, Mr. Pearson composes a Christmas poem every year. These reverent and happy carols are gathered into a book that will delight readers who are seeking an antidote to the commercialism of our time.
- *This, My Bequest*, and other poems, by Willis Eberman. (Francestown, New Hampshire, \$2.50). Outstanding lyrics by an Oregon poet familiar to all readers of the STEP LADDER.
- *Merry-Go-Round of Verse*, by Elsie Melchert Fowler (6620 Diversey Avenue, Chicago 35, Illinois, Creative Enterprises, \$2.50). Humorous, imaginative verse for children 6 to 10.
- *The Simon Passion*, by Henry Birnbaum (Route 4, Box 186, Fitzgerald, Georgia, Olivant House, 50¢). A long, mystical, symbolic poem about man's relation to the universe.
- *Don't Call Me by My Right Name*, and other stories, by James Purdy. Illustrations by the author (New York, The William-Frederick Press, \$2.50). A collection of modern, naturalistic, sometimes brutal prose pieces.

## PERIODICALS RECEIVED ON EXCHANGE

- *Brushfire '56* (vol. 1, no. 7.) Literary magazine of the University of Nevada, Reno. Price 50¢ issue.
- *Modern American Sonnet*, Box 1231, Washington 13, D. C. In vol. 29, no. 5 is reprinted "He Prepareth a Table Before Me," by Margaret G. Hindes, from the Summer 1956 STEP LADDER. Single copies, 25¢; subscription, \$2.50.
- *Rewrite*, published quarterly by Writers' Counsel Service, 50 West Street, Lunenburg, Massachusetts. 50¢ copy; \$2 year. News, suggestions, criticism, and valuable help to all writers.
- *Dawn*, a young writers' magazine, Laramie, Iowa. Editor Dixie Lynne requests contributions and subscriptions from all young people under 24 years of age. Published bi-monthly, price 50¢ issue; \$2.00 year.
- *The Guild Broadsheets*, published by John Hoffman at the Guild Press, Crayke, Yorkshire, England. No. 1, July 1956 of this 4-page leaflet is devoted to STEP LADDER poet Frederic Vanson. Single copy 6d; 7¢ U.S.
- *Poetry Public*, edited by Lawrence R. Holmes. Note new address: 103 University Avenue, Hastings, Nebraska. Quarterly, 50¢ issue; \$2.00 year.
- *Existaria*, edited by Carl Larsen. 328 Palm Drive, Hermosa Beach, California. "A journal of existent hysteria." 50¢ issue; \$2.00 year.
- *Epos*, editors, Will Tullos and Evelyn Thorne. Lake Como, Florida. Payment, two copies. Quarterly, \$1.00 year.
- *Pacific Explicator*, a journal of analysis to be published within the covers of the *Blue Guitar*. Submit explications and inquiries to 9067 Amboy Avenue, Sun Valley, California.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Phyllis Hanson's "Suddenly, the Island" (Summer STEP LADDER) was reprinted in the New York *Herald Tribune* on August 19, 1956.
- The U. S. Information Agency is seeking candidates for overseas posts as Cultural Affairs Officers, Information Officers, and Bi-national Center Officers. Only those with a record of achievement in public affairs, cultural affairs, including artistic and scholarly work, English-language teaching, or some medium of communication should apply. Age limits 31 to 55. Salary range \$5,700 to \$10,700, plus allowances. Candidates must be willing to serve anywhere in the world. Send for application forms and further information to Mr. Argus Tressider, Cultural Affairs Advisor, Room 652 Walker-Johnson Building, U. S. Information Agency, Washington 25, D.C.

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Grace Noll Smith  
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Des Moines 16, Iowa

## JOHN DONNE

The bud is from the briefest pang of birth,  
The rose fulfilling life ere death will come;  
And like the rose a man metes out his girth,  
Then dies: a day's short length, his sum.  
Is death not more immeasureable than life?  
Exciting, enigmatic in its doubt  
Of man's exalted state, and so more rife  
For him to overcome with daring bout?  
All day we fight our baser selves and meet  
Its threat; its bearding us with powerful force:  
A death in life. It may be we defeat  
It only when our day has run its course.  
How be it! I shall fight it though aware  
Of night's approach and give it my last dare!

